1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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such facts of common life which would link the whole tribe we find only one—a weak, potential link, determining individual action only, namely, the rule of hospitality which every Nupe must extend to his fellow tribesmen (but which he would not refuse to strangers).[1] Otherwise the common life that exists in Nupe takes its course in a very much more narrow compass, in scattered villages, towns, or groups of villages—small circles on the spacious tribal map.

Politically the Nupe people are scattered over several 'countries', seven Emirates and chieftainships to-day, and four or five in pre-European times. Even the ancient Nupe kingdom has not, as far as our evidence goes, included the whole group; sections of Nupe have always lived outside its boundaries, and other tribes or tribal sections beside the Nupe have formed the nationals of these countries of Nupe. To-day the largest of them is Bida Emirate with a population of 171,458, the core of the ancient kingdom of Nupe whose present rulers still take the title *Etsu Nupe*, King of Nupe. Some of the other, smaller Nupe states are ruled by independent kings (in modern terminology, Emirs): Patigi and Lafiagi, comprising an area of 3,023 square miles and a population of 90,702, and Agaie and Lapai, with an area of 2,587 square miles, and populations of 24,174 and 25,000, respectively. Other Nupe territories are but small chieftainships, political districts, under the rulership of Hausa, Yoruba, or Gbira kings: Zuguma (with a population of 5,000) under the Hausa Emir of Kontagora, Shonga and Shari (appr. 17,000) under the Fulani-Yoruba Emir of Ilorin, and Eggã and its hinterland (5,000) under the *Atta* of Gbira. In Bida, Patigi, Lafiagi, and Agaie the Nupe represent the vast majority of the population; in Kontagora, Lapai, Ilorin, and Gbira they are a small minority, living side by side with Hausa, Yoruba, Yagba, Gbari, Kakanda, and Gbira.

If the Nupe tribe is thus not a local group in the strict sense of the word, it is not a linguistic unit either. Nupe is spoken to-day by the bilingual Gbari of Paiko and Lapai and the Kakanda on the Niger. On the other hand, some of the split-off sections and colonies of Nupe, though still laying claim to tribal membership, have abandoned and forgotten their mother tongue. True, these facts reflect only comparatively recent historical changes. But language as such, in its very structure and organization, proves the same divergence between the two social realities, tribe and linguistic group. Nupe language belongs to the group of Sudanese languages, and within this category forms, together with Ibo, Edo, Ijo, Andoni, and Yoruba, the '*Kwa*-group' of West African languages.[2] Nupe is related more closely, in structure and vocabulary, to Gbari and Kakanda (I am speaking here only of languages which I have studied myself). But to speak of Nupe language pure and simple is incorrect. There exist to-day five markedly different dialects: a dialect which we will term Nupe proper, and the dialects of Ebe, Žitako, Bassa,

[1] There exists a fine distinction, though: fellow-tribesmen who claim hospitality are, where possible, given a sleeping hut to spend the night in, and are often invited to share a meal with their hosts; strangers sleep in the entrance hut of the compound.

[2] See D. Westermann, *Africa*, viii, p. 145, 1935.

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and Kupa. Nupe proper differs from Ebe, or Bassa from Žitako, no less than Nupe differs from the languages of the other, related, tribes, Gbari and Kakanda. Dialects, language, language group, or linguistic class—these are all fluid categories, shading over into one another, and none of them capable of being identified with tribe or people.

Political group and language group thus imply the existence of the tribe, they do not explain it. The objective reality of political and linguistic organization leaves undefined the nature of that elusive human substratum, tribe or people. Nor can we count on any external symbols of tribal unity to help us with the definition. No tribal costume, or tribal emblems, exist, no tattoos or face-markings characteristic of all Nupe.[1] Yet to the Nupe man himself the Nupe tribe or the Nupe people is a clearly defined, unmistakable entity. He will rarely hesitate whether to describe the population of a district or village as Nupe or to put it down as alien, non-Nupe. This is, of course, an expression of traditional, historically accumulated, and transmitted knowledge. People and tribe themselves represent but the product of complex historical processes, contacts, and ramifications. These processes are no longer traceable to-day; but even if we could trace them they would tell us nothing about the nature of this social fact which we witness to-day, the classification of groups which do not speak the same language and do not live together in 'one country' unified by political organization, under the heading of 'one tribe'. The only definition of tribe that seems possible is the tautological statement that a tribe or people is a group unit the members of which claim to form a group unit. But perhaps there exists some other, objective, social reality which can help us to define this evasive concept?

We have not examined yet that paramount social reality, culture. But culture no less than language or living-together seems a fluid criterion of tribal unity. The only definition of tribe that we can give in terms of culture is to call the tribe a group possessing more or less the same culture—as it possesses more or less the same language or lives more or less in contiguity and 'togetherness'. In Nupe the unit of culture is in certain respects smaller than the unit of the tribe. The different 'countries' of Nupe represent different, and differently organized, cultural 'provinces'. Culture varies with environment and the productive organization which it entails; it expresses the changing dominant interests involved in social, political, and economic conditions. We can thus speak of a riverain Nupe culture, a hunters' or peasant culture, and distinguish town from rural culture, or the culture of the ruling group from the culture of the subjects and commoners. The cultural unit is also wider than the unit of the tribe. Nupe shares its political and social system with many tribes in West Africa, its traditional religion with neighbouring groups in the north, east, and south, its modern religion, Islam, with the whole Sudan. There is, in fact, good sense in speaking of a West African culture, or a culture of the inland groups of West Africa (as against the culture of the groups in the rain-forest and near the coast). Finally, culture appears also, as it were, crystallized in the form of

[1] See below, p. 22.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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Kudu and occupy the rich oil-palm district of Yeti. The name Kyedye, finally, is often used synonymously for all canoe-men and fishermen on the main river. Unity of environment, a uniform productive system, a uniform material culture, represent a first aspect of the cultural unity of the sub-tribe.

Then there is language, certain linguistic differences which throw into relief the cultural boundaries between sub-tribes. The Žitako, Ebe, and Kupa still speak dialects which differ considerably from each other and from the Nupe spoken in the rest of the country. To-day most people in these sub-tribes are bilingual and understand and speak both their own dialect and 'Nupe proper'. The Gbedegi, too, are said to have spoken a special dialect, only a generation or two ago. No trace is left of their language; I found only one old man in Jebba Island who could speak a little Gbedegi. In the area where Nupe proper is spoken only insignificant dialectal differences exist. This linguistic unification within Nupe is the counterpart of the expansion of Nupe language (Nupe proper) and culture beyond the tribal boundaries. Both reflect the same development. The linguistic unification proceeded from the political centre of Nupe kingdom, the area of the Beni, Kyedye, and Bataci sub-tribes. Their dialects, identified with the language of the Nupe state, gradually came to embrace all other tribal sections. The language map of Nupe reveals the phases of this process, the stages in the growth of a supreme, unified culture. We can see the resistance to assimilation increase as we move away from the centre of expansion: the dialects spoken on the borders of the kingdom are losing their identity more slowly and more reluctantly than the dialects of the groups in the centre. The last phase of this development is not yet completed. We are yet to see the full Nupe-ization of Žitako, Ebe, and Kupa.

But in the centre of this expansion the differentiation between cultural centre and periphery gains a new meaning. It is conceived of as a differentiation not of dialects representative of tribal sections, but of dialects, or forms of *patois*, representative of a cultural and social milieu and upbringing. To-day we have a Bida-Nupe, a 'higher', more refined Nupe (a Nupe which, for example, has replaced many Nupe words by words adopted from Hausa and Arabic); and we have, besides, the cruder, 'low', peasant Nupe—sometimes called 'pagan' Nupe—spoken in the districts. However, this new attitude towards cultural differences, this evaluation on the scale of a 'lower' and 'higher', a more or less refined culture, belongs to another chapter.

The cultural unity of the sub-tribe manifests itself also in the religious field. Certain cults and rituals are peculiar to single sub-tribes, and inter-tribal contact and assimilation have hardly obscured these cultural boundaries. Certain cults, bound up with conditions of environment, seem linked naturally to special areas: a sacrifice to the mythical ancestor of kola-nut planting among the Kusopa; cults which have to do with the water, with floods, with the dangers of the river, and success and safety in fishing, among the riverain groups. The *elo* ritual, and the *mamma* cult, masked ceremonies, are known only among the Gbedegi; the *žikinta* among the Ebe, the *gani* among the Benu, the 'white' *gunnu*

LANGUAGE

197 Nupe belongs to the Larger Unit[3] of Kwa languages of West Africa, which also includes the languages or dialects spoken by the Igbira, Igala, Idoma, and other peoples dealt with in this volume of the Ethnographic Survey.[4]

The Nupe Dialect Cluster together with those of Igbira and Gbari[5] make up the Nupe Language Group. But the Nupe are not linguistically homogeneous or exclusive. The bi-lingual Gbari of Paiko and Lapai also speak Nupe, while some of the split-off sections and colonies of Nupe have lost their native tongue. The Kakanda are said to speak a closely related language which may be a Nupe dialect. Although Gbari is a separate dialect cluster of the Nupe Language Group much of its vocabulary is identical with Nupe, which also has a close structural resemblance to both Gbari and Kakanda.

The Nupe cluster consists of five markedly different dialects: Nupe proper; Ebe, spoken by the Ebe sub-tribe; Žitako or Dibo, more closely related to Gbari; Kupa, spoken by the Kupa and Cekpaŋ sub-tribes; Basa-Nge, spoken by the Basa-Nge, a split-off section. The Gbedye sub-tribe are said to have spoken a separate dialect which is now lost. Nupe proper is spoken by the Kyedye sub-tribe and others and there are only insignificant dialectal differences between the areas where it is spoken. Bida Nupe ("higher Nupe") exhibits a fondness for Hausa words and phrases which have replaced many Nupe words. The other four dialects differ considerably from each other and from Nupe as spoken in the rest of the country, but most of the speakers of these dialects are bi-lingual and also speak Nupe proper.[5a]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

133 The Nupe country is low-lying and undulating, not more than 200 ft. above sea level in most parts. A few ridges of rocky hills and some flat-topped hillocks rise above the plain; the highest of these are not more than 800 ft. above sea level. On the banks of the Niger there are stretches of thick riverain forest alternating with shrub and low bush. During the rains, the forest-covered banks and the open bush are flooded far inland and become vast swamps.

The Niger and the Kaduna Rivers form the two axes of the country. A network of smaller rivers and creeks, rich in fish, provides an efficient system of natural irrigation. Upstream from Jebba Island the Niger is narrow, with rapids and dangerous rocky passages. Between Jebba Island and Baro it is broad and navigable for big steamers for half the year.

134 The soil is mostly rich and fertile, especially in the thinly populated districts to the west of the Kaduna River. Round Bida town fertility has been much reduced by over-cultivation. The soil consists of red earth mixed with laterite and is rich in silicates. There is some iron ore which is mined by the natives on the slopes of the low broken hills.

137 The vegetation is typical for an area of transition from the southern forest belt to the northern savannah. Narrow strips or patches of thick forest vegetation lie in the river valleys and watercourses; inland, thick forest, shrub, and orchard bush alternate with open parkland, except round Bida and Agaie, where it has been cleared by intensive cultivation. There is virgin forest west of Kaduna.

Nupe country is the most northern area for oil-palm, yam, and the southern variety of maize; it is at the southern limit for date-palm, shea-nut, and millet. Other trees are: locust-bean, indigo, silk-cotton, mango (a European importation), kola-nut, and banana.[6]

[3] Westermann and Bryan, 1952, pp. 85–6. Their terminology is used here.
[4] See below, pp. 55–155.
[5] To be dealt with in a forthcoming volume of the Survey.
[5a] Nadel, 1942, pp. 13–14, 18, 23, 132; 1940, p. 165; Westermann, 1935; Meek, 1925, p. 137 (and map); Temple, 1919, pp. 113, 117, 320 324.
[6] Nadel, 1942, p. 1; 1940a, p. 194.

NUPE.

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131 The Nupe people are distributed over the southern part
771 of the Protectorate in clans that have little connection with each other. Probably nearly half are pagans practising different forms of religion, the remainder are Muhammadans. The Niger Province is the headquarters of the tribe, who are to be found in their greatest numbers in the vicinity of the Niger and Kaduna Rivers. They claim to be indigenous, but some authorities
173 trace a connection between them and the Gabi, erstwhile inhabitants of Egypt. There is a legend to the effect that a certain stranger, a hunter, called Abduazizi, travelling from the east, arrived with his family at the town of Doko Daji, where he settled amongst the Bini. He was given the title of Nefiu, the Arabic word for fugitive, whence arises the corruption Nufe, Nupe. It is also asserted that Nupe is not so much the name
[101] of a tribe as of a language, and that it may well be that the new
197 comers adopted the speech of the older inhabitants, the Gwari or Gbari, between which and Nupe there are now only

dialectical differences. Many words are identical; they have a similar custom of splitting the verb, and the main difference is that where the Gbari form the negative by the terminal letter R, the Nupe form it by M. It was at Nupiko where the Kaduna flows into the Niger, that Edegi first consolidated the clans under one Chief and founded the Nupe Kingdom (*vide* History of the Niger Province). It was from that region Rabba, that those Nupe came who now inhabit the upper reaches of the Niger in Kontagora and Borgu to Yelwa and beyond into Sokoto Province, where their tribal marks consist of two deep scars on either side of the nose. From this northerly point they follow the river down through Ilorin Province and Kabba, though her Egga is the only place where they are of pure race, as elsewhere they have intermarried freely with neighbouring tribes. These Egga Nupe migrated there from Bida. There are also settlements of Nupe right up the Benue as far as the Ribado Division of Yola, for they are a great trading people and take advantage of the markets on the waterways. There are 1,047 in Nassarawa Emirate; elsewhere they have not been censussed.

The distinctive tribal mark is a curved line from the bridge of the nose to the corner of the mouth, on the right-hand side of the face.

The Nupe population of Agaie number 24,335, and of Lapai 5,061.

The size of the clan may very roughly be assessed at over 100,000 in the Niger Province.

The Emir was chosen from one of the three royal families, Osuman Zaki, Masaba, and Umaru Majigi, all descendants of the Filane founder of the dynasty Mallam Danyo, each of the three families in succession having the right to rule the clan. The Elders would meet together and discuss who was likely to make the best Chief, and having chosen would consult the Mallamai as to the propriety of their selection. As some amongst the Mallamai claimed the gift of foreknowledge, their advice was almost invariably followed. Delay was avoided as far as possible, because in the interval between the death of the Nupe King and the appointment of his successor (which might not be till after the burial), no law could be enforced. If any crime were committed during that period the perpetrator was safe from subsequent punishment, and any prisoner who escaped might not be recaptured.

Thus on the occasion of the death of Muhammadu in 1916, which occurred at nine in the evening, his wife performed the last rites before his death was known outside the compound, and he was buried at 3 a.m. in his house, the public not being acquainted of the fact till later in the day.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922

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77 offerings of goats and fowls. The "Ndakogboiya" is, however,
626 losing its efficacy, and indeed Muhammadanism is rapidly replacing the ancient faith.

● 197 The influence of the Nupe is great, as may be seen from the
634 following lists of septs who speak the Nupe language, or a dialect thereof, and are probably of Nupe origin. These dialects are intelligible to all Nupe. The first three mentioned were by far the largest and most important.

1. Pateji.	8. Bini.	14. Kusopa.
2. Kupa.	9. Dibo.‡	15. Zumbufu.
3. Baedeji.*	10. Duchu.	16. Kutegi.§
4. Kede.	11. Ebe.	17. Enegi.§
5. Bangawa.†	12. Etsu.§	18. Gbachi.§
6. Bata.	13. Kakanda.†	19. Ganagana.‡
7. Batachi.		

634 The Nupe of Pateji are situated in Ilorin Province. They are the descendants of the original Nupe Sarakuna, who are now scattered all over the country and are called "Agabi," the
[304] name for their distinctive mark of one broad scar on each side of the nose (on the cheek). The custom of cicatrization has become optional.

The Nupe of Kupa inhabit the Agbaja District of Kabba
[304] Province; there are also a few in the Bunu District. Their distinctive mark is two lines on each side of the face, from the temple to the lip; within these are a series of small cuts. Their population number some 3,600. Their name is said to be a contraction of "Oku-pari" (=canoe-men of Oku), a river in
[411] Kontagora Province. Their weapons are flint locks and spears, arrows only being used in small numbers.

The Kede are a riverain section who have spread along the river banks in the Niger and Ilorin Provinces. The word "Kede" signifies "Dan Sarki," and is connected with a tradition that dates back to the sixteenth century, circ. 1505 A.D., when Edigi, who was travelling up the river, received assistance with his canoe from a man whom he found seated upon a stone fishing, gowned in two robes, one black, the other white. Edigi, when he had established himself as King, conferred upon this man the title of Kuta (which means the man who wears gowns of black and white). One of the Kuta's salutations is "takun"

* The Baedeji are of Yoruba extraction, though, having settled in Nupe territory at Jebba, they have adopted the Nupe language.

† Their Nupe origin is disputed.

‡ The Dibo, Ganagana and Kakanda are sometimes claimed as Nupe, but their languages are different, and it is unlikely that their connection is closer than that induced by neighbourhood.

§ Naturalised Nupe.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922

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In this world they[1] sacrifice to a god called Dako-Gwoya, who takes visible form after harvest, when a big feast is held and much beer is drunk. He has the appearance of a man, but is higher than a double-storeyed house. He speaks and tells the people what to do in business and social matters, but though the women may hear him they may not see him. 634 771 776

The Nupe of Zumbufu (on the Niger) are of mixed blood, having intermarried freely with the Yoruba. Zumbufu was founded by a hunter early in the nineteenth century, who came from the Lafiaji District, but they were never tributary to any but the Bini of Bida. They were incorporated in the Share District of Ilorin Province in 1910. They too are pagans and worship a god called Bakoboya, who is recognised as far away as Padda in the Pategi Division, an evil spirit who brings sickness and famine. He appears in visible forms at festivals, in the guise (with the aid of a ten foot pole) of a very tall man. His representative dances round the town, surrounded by the head-men of Zumbufu, and throughout the dance they beat each other violently, but are said to feel no pain. 634 776

The inhabitants of Kutegi, Enegi, and Gbachi, are immigrants from Bornu. They still wear the Kanuri tribal marks, but they have adopted the Nupe language. 634 304 197 167

[1] [i.e. The Kusopa subtribe.--Analyst]